

## **UPDATE: The Truth about IDOE's 2011 Legislative Agenda**

### **Myth # 1: Indiana's reforms will allow the State Superintendent to terminate any teacher's contract at any time.**

IDOE has not been made aware of language of this nature in any bill, and if it did exist, I would wholeheartedly oppose it. Personnel decisions of this nature should be made at the local level.

### **Myth # 2: The state will require school corporations to publish summaries of teacher's evaluations in the local media.**

IDOE has not advocated for the sharing of personally identifiable information. The Department does support school corporations submitting annual reports to IDOE identifying the number of educators placed in each performance category. Again, the report should not include names or personally identifiable information. IDOE would then publish the results in a manner that protects and respects the privacy of Hoosier educators.

### **Myth # 3: Indiana's reforms to teacher due process will result in teachers being unfairly dismissed from the classroom.**

Our legislative agenda DOES NOT CALL FOR THE ELIMINATION OF DUE PROCESS FOR TEACHERS. Instead, IDOE aims to streamline current due process, align it with the current principal due process, and make it more focused on demonstrated teacher effectiveness based on locally developed, multi-faceted evaluations. An administrator must be able to prove a teacher's incompetence with documented ineffective evaluation ratings in multiple years despite serious attempts to improve through professional development. The higher a teacher's licensing status, the more ineffective ratings it takes to remove a teacher from the classroom. IDOE supports legislation requiring corporations to notify teachers of non-renewal in advance and then gives teachers the right to a conference with the local superintendent and the school board to present their case with representation.

### **Myth # 4: The state will be able to force a school corporation to modify a collective bargaining agreement that it "does not like" and withhold funds if the corporation does not comply.**

This idea is not proposed or supported in any legislative proposals that are part of our education agenda.

### **Myth # 5: The Superintendent of Public Instruction will determine the state funding formula.**

This is completely false. The Superintendent has no such authority. Members of Indiana's General Assembly develop the funding formula. More specifically, more than 40 members assigned to pertinent committees will have a say in developing the formula that dictates how state dollars are spent on education. Before it can be enacted, all 150 members of the state legislature vote on the proposed formula.

### **Myth # 6: Students leaving public schools for non-government schools will bankrupt Indiana's public schools.**

Public dollars spent on education will continue to follow the student, just like they do in the case of public school transfer students. Opportunity scholarships will be means-tested, and students will receive a percentage of the tuition support from the "sending" school corporation. Since school corporations receive a set amount of tuition support for each of their students each year, they will not be harmed by losing funds, as they should not

require funding for students they no longer educate. Additionally, it is worth noting Indiana's non-government schools have very limited capacity to accept new students.

**Myth # 7: Non-government schools that participate in the opportunity scholarship program will not have the same accountability as public schools.**

Participating non-government schools will be held to the same high accountability standards as those to which the state holds public schools. Under this proposal, every participating school:

- Must be accredited by the state or a recognized accrediting agency;
- Must administer ISTEP+ and ECAs to all students—not just scholarship students;
- Will be assigned letter grades under PL 221; and
- Will receive growth data calculations.

**Myth # 8: Indiana's Education Agenda calls for the repeal of collective bargaining rights.**

This statement is completely false. IDOE has not advocated for the repeal of collective bargaining rights, and our legislative agenda will not include language that calls for the elimination of collective bargaining rights.

To be clear, our agenda does aim to focus collective bargaining agreements between school corporations and teachers unions on salaries and wage-related benefits – and we believe this will help ensure Indiana's great teachers are getting paid what they deserve to get paid. It will also help schools put students first by eliminating provisions that require administrators to conduct blind draws, roll the dice or consider the sum of the last four digits of a teacher's Social Security Number to break a tie on seniority when making reduction in force decisions.

**Myth # 9: Indiana's Education Agenda deducts money from teacher retirement funds to avoid further cuts to Indiana schools.**

There is no truth to this statement. No one at IDOE has had a discussion surrounding this topic, and I promise no one will. If this possibility is discussed during this year's legislative session, I will oppose it. I believe there are many important discussions to be held during the upcoming legislative session. Everyone's opinion should be valued, and everyone deserves a seat at the table. But false statements meant to stir up fear have no place in this discussion. I would ask that anyone who comes across this rumor, or one of a similar nature, have the courage to dispel this false statement and re-focus the discussion on the important issues which will impact student achievement.

**Myth # 10: Indiana's Education Agenda mandates an evaluation system that will evaluate teachers based solely on students' ISTEP+ scores.**

IDOE does not support evaluation tools that only take into account student performance on standardized tests. IDOE continues to advocate for a teacher evaluation system that takes into account multiple measures including student growth and student engagement. We have always said students' academic growth should be part of a comprehensive evaluation system that examines multiple factors.

**Myth # 11: Indiana's Education Agenda mandates equal percentages of teachers be placed into four performance categories during the evaluation process or places them into categories using a bell curve**

This is absolutely false. The IDOE advocates creating four evaluation categories for teachers and principals (highly effective, effective, improvement necessary, and ineffective). While teachers will be placed into categories based on several performance indicators, there is no model that mandates 25% of teachers be placed into each category. Such a model would be statistically invalid.

What we do know is that Indiana's current teacher evaluation systems rates 99% of teachers as effective or above. While I have no doubt that many of our teachers are effective, no profession has a 99% effective rating. Our current system is statistically invalid and must be refined to provide teachers with helpful feedback that encourages improvement and rewards success.

**Myth # 12: Indiana's Education Agenda forces schools and school corporations to use a one-size-fits-all evaluation tool.**

This couldn't be further from the truth. Indiana's Education Agenda aims to increase local control by allowing school corporations to use evaluation tools that work best within their school communities. IDOE will provide helpful guardrails that focus on educator qualities that drive student success. But there will not be a one-size-fits-all tool or rubric.

For months, IDOE has been working with teachers, administrators, education policy groups, teachers' union representatives, and higher education representatives to develop a model evaluation tool and implementation plan which will be made available to all Indiana school districts. Each district will then have the opportunity to adopt the state's model or develop its own tool and plan using state guidelines. IDOE also hopes to provide implementation support, particularly for struggling schools.

**Myth #13: Indiana's Education Agenda reduces teacher salaries.**

IDOE's legislative proposals do not aim to reduce teacher salaries. Rather, the proposals seek to enable local school corporations to set up systems to reward teachers for driving student growth. School corporations should have the opportunity to reward their best teachers, and the policies supported by IDOE will allow them to do so.

**Myth #14: Indiana's Education Agenda takes tenure away from teachers who already have it.**

There is no plan to take away tenure from teachers who have earned it under the current system. IDOE does, though, support a revamped tenure process for incoming teachers wherein job security and protections are based on performance rather than just seniority.